



## School kitchen staff can benefit from a few simple rules of ergonomics

By Lita Chang, SIA Prevention Services

The setup of a school kitchen is key to keeping shoulder and neck injuries to a minimum. For example, abruptly reaching overhead to stock shelves can cause neck and/or shoulder strain. This can be avoided altogether with a little thought ahead of time as to where best to place items. Generally, heavier items (those 5 pounds or more) should be placed at chest level or below. Lighter items (less than 5 pounds) can be placed above the head.

When carrying heavy items, it's important to carry them close to the body. The farther away from the body the items are, the more strain there is on the shoulders and back. Carrying heavy objects close to the body better utilizes the body's center of gravity, making the whole process easier.

For moving carts, pushing rather than pulling is best. Pushing a cart utilizes the legs, which are generally the strongest part of the body. Pushing objects also make them easier to control. Pulling a cart puts more strain on the shoulders, which can increase the risk of injury.

Micro breaks are important when doing repetitive tasks such as washing dishes or filling trays. Every 20 to 30 minutes, taking 20 seconds to stretch the muscles to help increase blood flow can help decrease injury. Remaining in a static position for more than 30 minutes may cause muscles to tense up, increasing the potential for injury.

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